Gallatin Forks Fishing Access Site
Proposed Bridge Replacement Project
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

Gallatin County proposes to replace Nixon Bridge on the Gallatin River and realign Nixon Gulch Road to access the bridge in order to meet the public's needs for increased safety and bridge capacity. The proposed realigned road, including a gabion-style retaining wall and a small portion of the abutments for the replaced bridge, would cross the existing Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) Gallatin Forks Fishing Access Site (FAS) which will then require reconfiguration and improvement of the current FAS facilities. Proposed improvements and developments include: an improved and expanded gravel parking area; a gravel boat launch; a pedestrian crosswalk and pedestrian river access; a concrete vault latrine; boundary fencing; and informational signs. In exchange for the .05 acres of Gallatin Forks FAS that would be used for the Nixon Gulch Road realignment, Gallatin County would grant .1 acre to FWP for the Gallatin Forks FAS. Gallatin Forks FAS provides an important access point on the Gallatin River for boaters and floaters, providing strategic access between existing FAS's.

2. Agency authority for the Proposed Action:

The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted Section 87-1-605, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), which directs Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The Legislature earmarked a funding account to ensure that the fishing access site program would be implemented. Section 87-1-303, MCA, authorizes the collection fees and charges for the use of fishing access sites and contains rule-making authority for their use, occupancy, and protection. Furthermore, Section 23-1-110, MCA, and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

ARM 12.8.602 requires the Department to consider the wishes of the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features, and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvement to fishing access sites or state parks. This document will illuminate the facets of the Proposed Action in relation to this rule. See *Appendix A* for HB 495 qualification.

3. Name of project:

Gallatin Forks Fishing Access Site Proposed Bridge Replacement Project

4. Project sponsor:

Gallatin County
c/o Stahly Engineering & Associates, Inc.
851 Bridge Drive, Suite 1
Bozeman, MT 59715
(406) 522-8594

5. Anticipated Schedule:

Estimated Public Comment Period: October/November 2018
Estimated Decision Notice: November 2018
Commission Approval Requested to Proceed: December 2018
Estimated Commencement Date: Spring 2019
Estimated Completion Date: Spring 2019
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 35%

6. Location:

The 80-acre Gallatin Forks FAS is located on 270 acres on the Gallatin River along Nixon Gulch Road, approximately 2 miles north of Manhattan, Montana, and about 10 miles northwest of Belgrade in Gallatin County. The proposed project site is located at SE1/4 Section 27, Township 2 North, Range 3 East *(Figures 1 and 2).*

Figure 1. General Location of Gallatin Forks FAS

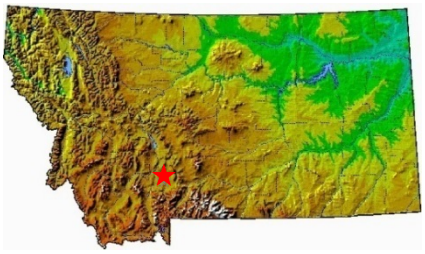


Figure 2. Area Location of Gallatin Forks FAS

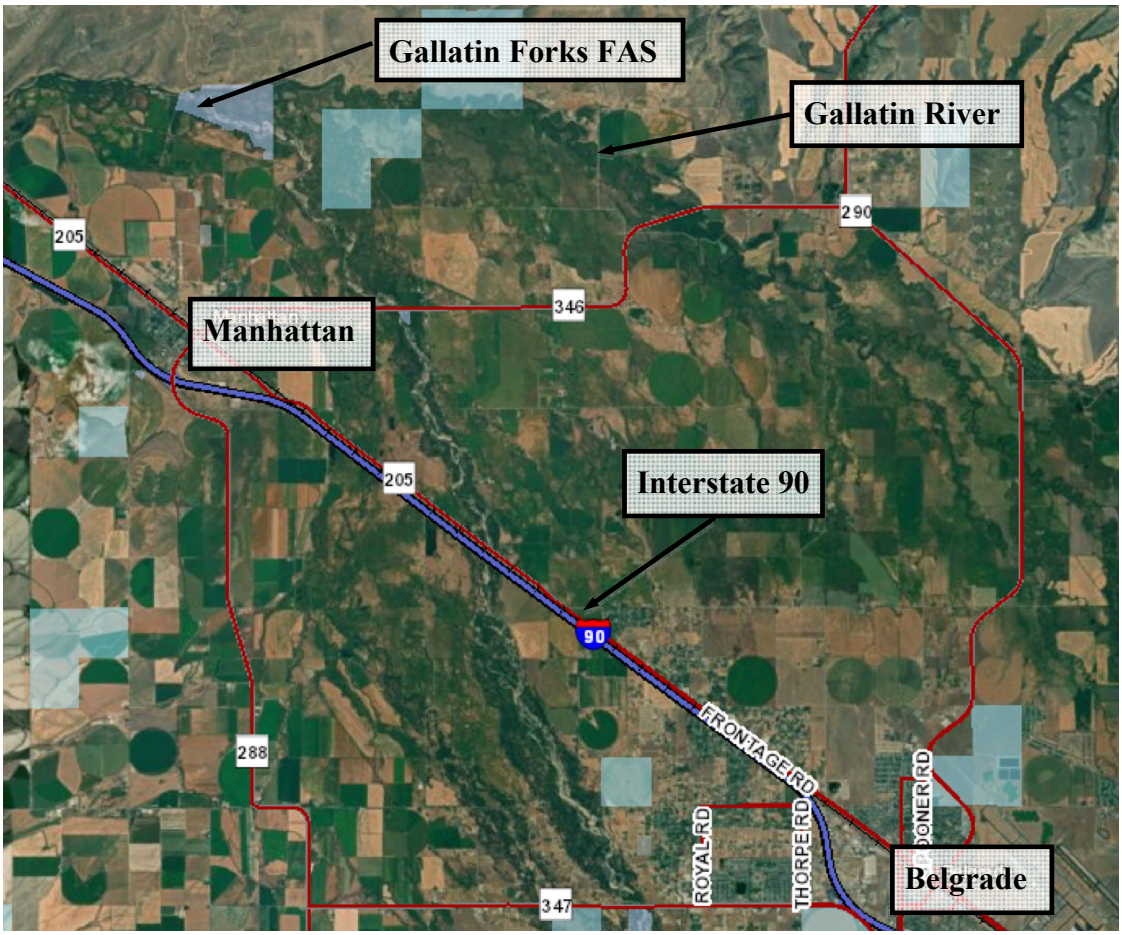
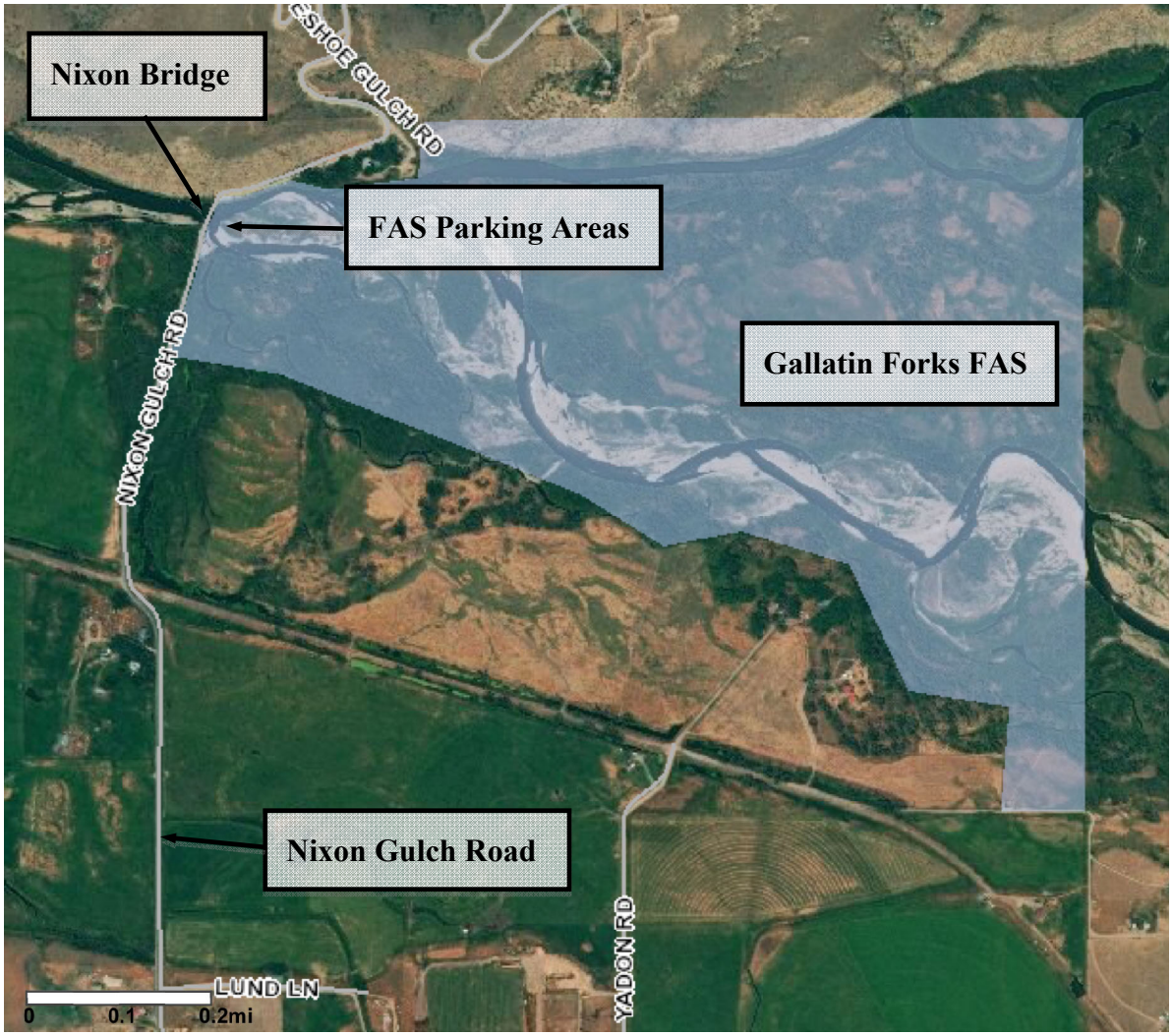


Figure 3. Gallatin Forks FAS Parcel Map



7. Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	0
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/	6	Dry cropland	0
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	½	Rangeland	0
Areas		Other	

Figure 4. Gallatin Forks FAS Preliminary Concept Site Plan

Figure 5. Gallatin Forks FAS Proposed Parking Improvements

Figure 6. Gallatin Forks FAS Gallatin County and FWP Proposed Land Swap

Photo 1. View of Nixon Bridge and Gallatin Forks FAS

Photo 2. View of the Existing Boat Launch and Parking Area at Gallatin Forks FAS

Photo 3. Proposed Parking Area Location with Wetland Area on Gallatin Forks FAS.

Photo 4. A View of the Existing and Proposed Boat Launch Locations.

8. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.

(a) Permits: Permits would be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

Agency Name	Permits
Gallatin County	Floodplain Permit and Sanitation Permit
Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality	318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	124 Montana Stream Protection Act
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Federal Clean Water Act

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks General License Fund	$ 0
Total	**$ 0***

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
Natural Heritage Program	Species of Concern *(Appendix B)*
State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural Clearance
Gallatin County Weed District	Weed Management Coordination

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

The Gallatin River rises in two branches on the north face of Three Rivers Peak in Yellowstone National Park. It flows northwest 120 miles, 97 of which are in Montana, to Three Forks, Montana, where it converges with the Jefferson and Madison Rivers to form the Missouri River. Meriwether Lewis named the river in 1805 for Albert Gallatin, the U.S. Treasury Secretary from 1801–1812. The central fork was named for Secretary of State James Madison and the western fork for President Thomas Jefferson. In addition to being a very popular fishing destination, with portions being designated as a Blue Ribbon trout stream and the remainder designated Red Ribbon by FWP, the Gallatin River is also popular for scenic and other recreational values. The river is very popular for all levels of whitewater rafting, with a one-mile section of class IV rapids called the “Mad Mile”. The Gallatin River is also scenic, winding through high alpine meadows, dropping into the rocky Gallatin Canyon, and flowing out into the Gallatin Valley.

The Gallatin River is about twelve miles long from the confluence of the West and East Gallatin Rivers to Three Forks, Montana, where it joins the Jefferson and Madison Rivers to form the Missouri River. In this section, the river flows through a narrow valley consisting of agricultural and grazing lands. The banks are primarily undercuts, and long, deep pools provide much of the fish cover. Except for the East and West Gallatin Rivers, tributaries to the Gallatin River are limited to a few spring creeks. Water can be slightly turbid year-round due to the sediment input from the East Gallatin River. The Gallatin River below the confluence of its forks suffers from sedimentation, warm temperatures, dewatering, and the presence of M. cerebralis, the causative agent of whirling disease. Trout populations decline in the lower river due to these factors and a variety of other cumulative impacts.

The 97-mile Gallatin River, which includes the West Gallatin River, is prized by fly fishermen for its entire length and ranks as the 10th most fly fished river in Montana.The proposed Gallatin Forks FAS is located on the Gallatin River at river mile 13 and is the only FAS on the eight-mile stretch between Four Corners FAS (river mile 16) and Bud Lilly FAS (river mile 8). The entire Gallatin River and its tributaries are open to angling year

round, as outlined in the Montana 2018 Fishing Regulations. According to recent FWP surveys, the average angler days per year from 2009 to 2015 on the 57-mile stretch from river mile 12 to river mile 69 was 50,723, with a low of 46,966 in 2011 and a high of 56,887 in 2013. The regional ranking for this stretch of river averaged the third most fished body of water, and the state ranking averaged the tenth most fished body of water in Montana out of more than 1,400 stream reaches, lakes, and reservoirs in Montana surveyed annually by FWP. Game fish opportunities include rainbow trout, brown trout and mountain whitefish.

The 270-acre Gallatin Forks FAS is a popular, heavily used FAS and provides an important access point on the Gallatin River for boaters and floaters *(Figure 3; Photo 1).* Being the only FAS with a designated boat launch in the 37-mile stretch from the mouth (river mile 0) and Axtell Bridge FAS (river mile 37), Gallatin Forks FAS provides a strategic access between existing FAS's. The proposed project would allow Gallatin Forks FAS to continue to be frequently used as a put-in and take-out site for floaters and boaters as well as for anglers on the Gallatin River. Existing facilities at Gallatin Forks FAS include a gravel parking area, gravel boat launch, jack-leg fencing along the river next to the parking area, informational signs, and rip-rap along the Gallatin riverbank next to the parking area.

The existing bridge, constructed in 1923 and considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), is in poor condition and no longer meets the needs of local residents and Gallatin County. The bridge is one lane and does not adequately or safely accommodate current traffic to the Gallatin River Ranch development north of the river and to others traveling on Nixon Gulch Road. In addition, the bridge does not safely accommodate the weight of current commercial vehicles serving the area. As a result, Gallatin County seeks to replace the current bridge with a newly constructed, two-lane bridge with adequate structural capacity and load limits to accommodate current and future use and assure the safety of the public traveling on Nixon Gulch Road.

Several alternatives were thoroughly examined to address the long-term solutions for this historic bridge while addressing the needs and concerns of the local community and Gallatin County. Options that were examined include: 1) updating and expanding the existing bridge in its current location; 2) retaining the existing bridge in its current location to be used as a foot bridge and building a new bridge either along side the old; 3) moving the old bridge for use in a new location and constructing a new bridge in its place, 4) constructing a new bridge in its place and selling or disposing of the existing bridge; and 5) eliminating the bridge and closing the road. It was determined that the No Action alternative was not a viable alternative because the existing bridge has serious deficiencies to the superstructure and substructure. After a thorough examination and consultation with FWP, Gallatin County, Stahly Engineering, nearby landowners, and members of the public, it was decided that replacing the old bridge with a newly constructed, two-lane bridge in the approximate original location was the most convenient and financially feasible alternative. The future destination of the old bridge, whether it is sold, donated and moved to a new location, or disposed of in a manner approved by the State of Montana, has not yet been determined. The ***Nixon Bridge Grant Preliminary Engineering Report*** prepared by Stahly Engineering & Associates, Bozeman, Montana is available for review upon request.

Gallatin County proposes to replace Nixon Bridge on the Gallatin River and realign Nixon Gulch Road to the bridge in order to meet the current and future needs for increased

safety and bridge capacity. The proposed realigned road, including a 6 foot high, gabion-style retaining wall, and a small portion of the abutments for the new bridge, would cross the existing FWP Gallatin Forks FAS, which would then require reconfiguration and improvement of the current FAS facilities. Proposed improvements and developments include: an improved and expanded gravel parking area; a gravel boat launch; a pedestrian crosswalk and pedestrian river access; a concrete vault latrine; boundary fencing; and informational signs *(Figures 4 & 5; Photo 2 & 4)*.

As part of the project, the existing bridge and associated abutments would be removed from their current locations. The existing bridge would be removed by the contractor and either disposed of according to state law or sold/donated for use in another location. In addition to removing the existing bridge, the bridge abutments will also be removed. In their current location, the bridge abutments constrict the flow of the Gallatin River causing downstream riverbank erosion, riverbed instability, and interference with the natural lateral adjustment of the river. By removing the constricting abutments, the flow of the river and its impacts on the riverbed and banks could return to more stable, natural conditions.

In exchange for the .05 acres of Gallatin Forks FAS that would be used for the Nixon Gulch Road realignment, Gallatin County would grant .1 acre to FWP for the Gallatin Forks FAS *(Figure 6).* The land disturbed by removal of the small part of Nixon Gulch Road would be re-seeded to prevent the establishment of weeds and soil erosion.

Because the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) partially funded the purchase of the 270-acre Gallatin Forks FAS in 1976, the property is encumbered with LWCF funds. In order to allow the land swap between FWP and Gallatin County, permission from the LWCF was necessary. Based upon a memorandum from Seth McArthur of the LWCF to FWP on August 31, 2018, "*we concur with your assessment that the current project does not meet the requirements which would trigger mitigation for a 6(f)(3) conversion of use. The proposed project will enhance the public's recreational opportunities, improve the parking area, and result in a new boat launch at the site. There is no loss of land or public recreation opportunities. In fact, this project will be an improvement the public will benefit from in perpetuity." (See Appendix E).*

Because the expanded parking area would be located in the vicinity of wetlands, Stahly Engineering & Associated contracted Confluence Consulting, Inc. of Bozeman, Montana, to conduct a delineation of wetlands within the project area south of and adjacent to the current Gallatin Forks FAS parking area *(Photo 3)*. It was found that a portion of the proposed parking area would be located on land classified as a Freshwater Forested/Scrub-Shrub Wetland. Because the size of the area disturbed by the proposed parking area is less than .1 acre, it does not qualify as a wetland mitigation project.

The property would be managed under existing FWP public use regulations. Management of the FAS would include routine maintenance, control of vehicles and firearms, and other accepted FWP recreation area management policies. Protection of the natural resources, the health and safety of visitors, and consideration of neighboring properties would all be considered and incorporated into development plans for this site. The FAS would be for day use only, and overnight camping would not be allowed on the site. Development of Gallatin Forks FAS would provide public access to the Gallatin River for fishing, boating, and floating and provide additional recreational opportunities for swimming, hiking, dog walking, picnicking, and wildlife viewing.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Several of the most common alternatives suggested by the public, agencies, and engineers were evaluated and are addressed below. Specific engineering and design alternatives that were evaluated are described in the *Gallatin County Nixon Bridge Preliminary Engineering Report, May 2016.* A copy of this report is available upon request.

Alternative A: No Action.

The No Action alternative is not an option for this bridge, as the existing bridge has serious deficiencies to the superstructure and substructure. The condition of the bridge does not allow for use by a number of emergency vehicles, and the alternate route is often impassable. The condition of the bridge will only continue to deteriorate which will eventually cause an even lower structural capacity of the bridge and possibly require closure. This bridge is considered vital infrastructure for Gallatin County due to the length and condition of the detour and the number of landowners affected. The limited allowable load and bridge width create a significant risk to public safety. In addition, Nixon Bridge is a fracture critical bridge, meaning that the failure of one tension member could result in collapse of the bridge.

Alternative B: Eliminating the Bridge and Closing the Road.

Eliminating the bridge is not feasible as the alternate route is 32 miles and often impassable. Nixon Gulch Road is a rural route serving 216 parcels in the Gallatin River Ranch subdivision as well as approximately 30 additional neighboring landowners. Based upon traffic counters installed by Gallatin County at the bridge, the average daily triffic is 407 vehicles per day. The cost to improve the alternate route is significantly higher than the cost of a new bridge and, by forcing landowners to use the alternate route, will impose a severe hardship on the citizens and safety of Gallatin County.

Alternative C: Rehabilitation of the Existing Structure.

Rehabilitation of the steel truss to increase the inventory load rating requires significant measures. While the rehabilitation of a steel truss can increase the load capacity of the bridge, most often it cannot bring the bridge up to standard design load requirements. Widening of the steel truss is also not realistically feasible due to the nature of a truss design. While this option would typically not be investigated further due to the limited improvement, users of the bridge expressed considerable interest in the option to rehabilitate the bridge. Stahly Engineering contacted HDR, Inc. to provide an opinion on the feasibility to retrofit the existing superstructure. HDR has significant past project experience for designing truss rehabilitations, which is not a common occurrence in Montana, and was able to efficiently provide the information requested. Based on the existing bridge inspection information, HDR provided a probable cost range for rehabilitation, as well as advantages and disadvantages associated with retrofitting the existing truss. Therefore, this option was explored further in the Alternative Analysis of the *Gallatin County Nixon Bridge Preliminary Engineering Report, May 2016.*

Alternative D: Replace Bridge with a Culvert.

The Gallatin River drainage basin and resulting peak stream flows are significant, as indicated by the existing structure length of 150-feet and the average flows of approximately 822 cfs. Based on the existing channel width and river flows, the use of a culvert at this location is not possible.

Alternative E: Proposed Action.

Gallatin County proposes to replace Nixon Bridge on the Gallatin River in approximately the same location and realign Nixon Gulch Road to the bridge in order to meet the public's needs for increased safety and bridge capacity. The proposed bridge would have two lanes and would be able to accommodate current and future standard weight loads. Specifically, it would be a two-span bridge with concrete beams and steel piles. This design was determined to have excellent durability, low maintenance, and would be the most cost effective. The proposed realigned road, including a 6-foot high, gabion-style retaining wall, and a small portion of the abutments for the replaced bridge would cross the existing Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) Gallatin Forks Fishing Access Site (FAS), which will then require reconfiguration and improvement of the current FAS facilities. Proposed improvements and developments include: an improved and expanded gravel parking area; a gravel boat launch; a pedestrian crosswalk and pedestrian river access; a concrete vault latrine; boundary fencing; and informational signs. In exchange for the .05 acres of Gallatin Forks FAS that would be used for the Nixon Gulch Road realignment, Gallatin County would grant .1 acre to FWP for the Gallatin Forks FAS. Gallatin Forks FAS provides an important access point on the Gallatin River for boaters and floaters, providing strategic access between existing FAS's.

11. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

FWP would employ Best Management Practices (BMP) *(Appendix D),* which are designed to reduce or eliminate sediment delivery to waterways during construction. FWP would develop the final design and specifications for the proposed project. All county, state and federal permits listed in Part I 8(a) above would be obtained by FWP as required. A private contractor selected through the State's contracting processes would complete the construction.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		Yes Positive	1b.
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X		Yes Positive	1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

1a. The proposed project would not affect existing soil patterns, structures, productivity, fertility, erosion, compaction, or instability. Soil and geologic substructure would remain stable during and after the proposed work.

1b. Erosion of the unimproved parking area would improve due to the proposed realignment of the paved Nixon Gulch Road and improved graveled parking area. During construction, some minor modifications to the existing soil features would be required for construction of the parking area, realigned Nixon Gulch Road, and gabion wall. Disturbed areas, including .1 acre of the existing Nixon Gulch Road that will be disturbed during the road realignment, would be seeded with a native seed mix to minimize erosion and sediment delivery to the Gallatin River and the spread of noxious weeds. The property is currently managed for wildlife habitat and is not in agricultural production. The proposed project would not affect soil productivity or fertility. FWP Best Management Practices (BMP) would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize erosion *(Appendix D).*

1c. No unique geologic or physical features would be altered by the proposed project.

1d. The removal of the existing Nixon Bridge abutments would significantly improve the river channel, bed, and banks by removing the flow constrictions that have modified the channel, bed, and banks over the last century. By removing the flow constrictions caused by the abutments, river flows could return to a more stable, natural condition.

The proposed road realignment, removal of the Nixon Bridge, and construction of the gravel boat launch would have temporary and minor adverse impacts on the bank of the Gallatin River. Minor amounts of sediment may enter the river during construction of the parking area, road, and gabion wall. Upon completion, erosion and sedimentation to the river would be

improved. Construction of the new bridge with new abutments would have both temporary and long-term impacts to the riverbank and bed.

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ✱**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		Yes	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				2b.
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.)		X				2e.

2a. Dust may be temporarily generated during construction of the parking area, the retaining wall, Nixon Gulch Road, gravel boat launch, new bridge and abutments, and removal of the existing bridge, abutments, and a potion of the existing Nixon Gulch Road. If additional materials were needed off-site, loading at the source site would generate minor amounts of dust. FWP would follow FWP BMP during all phases of construction to minimize risks and reduce dust. See *Appendix D* for the BMP. Diesel equipment would be used to implement the proposed project. There would be a temporary increase in diesel exhaust. If the proposed project were implemented, odors from diesel exhaust would dissipate rapidly. The impacts would be short term and minor.

2b. FWP would regularly maintain the latrine to minimize objectionable odors.

2e. The proposed project would have no impact on air quality in the vicinity of Gallatin Forks FAS and would not result in any discharge that could conflict with federal or state are quality regulations.

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		Yes Positive	3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		Yes	3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X			Yes Positive	
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?			X		Yes	3d.
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?			X		Yes	3h.
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)			X		Yes	3l.
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)			X		Yes	3m.

3a. Construction of the proposed project and removal of the existing bridge, abutments, and Nixon Gulch Road may cause a temporary, localized increase in turbidity in the Gallatin River. However, the proposed graveled parking area, gravel boat launch, and the realigned paved Nixon Gulch Road would reduce sediment discharge to the Gallatin River. FWP would obtain a Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) 318 Authorization Permit for Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity. FWP BMPs would be followed during all construction *(Appendix D).*

3b. Construction of a gravel parking area, gravel boat launch, realigned paved Nixon Gulch Road, and removal of the existing Nixon Gulch Road, Nixon Bridge, and abutments may alter surface runoff. The proposed project would be designed to minimize any effect on surface water, surface runoff, and drainage patterns. FWP BMP would be followed *(Appendix D).*

3c. The bridge crosses the Gallatin River at the approximate confluence of the Gallatin River, East Gallatin River, and Camp Creek, making this a challenging project location. The configuration of the river has changed significantly over the last ten years. With the removal

of the old bridge abutments, the downstream channel, riverbed, and upstream riverbanks could return to a more stable, natural condition.

3d. There may be a minor, temporary increase of runoff during construction. FWP BMP would be followed *(Appendix D).*

3h. The use of heavy equipment during construction may result in a slight risk of contamination from petroleum products and a temporary increase in sediment delivery to the river. FWP BMPs would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize these risks *(Appendix D).*

3l. According to the Gallatin County Floodplain Administrator, the majority of the proposed project site would be located within the 100-year floodplain of the Gallatin River with a 1% annual chance of a flood hazard, as shown on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Panel Map #30031C0340D, effective date September 2, 2011. Permits from FWP, Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and Gallatin County would be obtained to insure the proposed project will follow federal, state, and county floodplain and water quality regulations.

3m. All impacts to water quality resulting from construction would be temporary. Water quality of the Gallatin River could improve because of the proposed project by reducing sediment delivery to the river and riverbank erosion.

4. VEGETATION **Will the proposed action result in?**	**IMPACT**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		Yes	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				4d.
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e.
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?			X		Yes	4f.
g. Other:						

4a. With the exception of .1 acre of wetland in the project area, the proposed project would have no or minor impacts on the plant communities and diversity of the project site. Due to the limited space available for parking with the realignment of Nixon Gulch road, the proposed parking area would be constructed over .1 acre of wetland. Because the size of the disturbed wetland is under .1 acre, wetland mitigation would not be required. After the existing bridge and a portion of Nixon Gulch Road are removed, approximately .1 acre of disturbed land would remain. All disturbed areas would be reseeded wherever possible to reduce erosion

and weed establishment and to encourage the growth of native riparian plant communities. Development of the parking area, gabion retaining wall, and realigned Nixon Gulch Road would have a minor impact on the vegetation, and a minimal number of trees and shrubs would be removed during construction. Because the construction area is small, impacts from construction would be minor.

4b. The proposed project would not alter the composition of plant communities at the site. The primary ecological system found on Gallatin Forks FAS is *Rocky Mountain Lower Montane-Foothill Riparian Woodland and Shrubland,* as defined by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP), and is dominated by narrow-leaf cottonwood and Rocky Mountain juniper. Native plant species found on the proposed project site include narrow-leaf cottonwood, Rocky Mountain juniper, Pacific willow, chokecherry, western snowberry, red-osier dogwood, Wood's rose, golden currant, black currant, starry solomon-seal, northern bedstraw, sedge sp., cattail, rush sp., and community juniper.

Common introduced species found on the property include smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass, cheatgrass, reed canarygrass, fowl bluegrass, creeping meadow foxtail, quackgrass, and dandelion. Canada thistle, listed as a Noxious Weed by the Montana Department of Agriculture, and cheatgrass, a Regulated Species, as classified by the Montana Department of Agriculture, are found on the site.

4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) Species of Concern database found three Montana plant Species of Concern within the vicinity of Gallatin Forks FAS including annual Indian paintbrush, Rocky Mountain twinpod, and alkali-marsh ragwort (*Appendix B- Environmental Summary)*

4d. No portion of the property is currently under agricultural production

4e. Canada thistle, a Noxious Weed as designated by the Montana Department of Agriculture, and populations of invasive cheatgrass, Regulated Species, are found along the Gallatin River and throughout the riparian forest. In conjunction with the Gallatin County Weed Department, FWP would implement the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological, and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property. Weed management would also include the establishment of native vegetation to prevent the spread of weeds. Vehicles would be restricted to the parking areas and Nixon Gulch Road, which would be maintained as weed-free, and vehicles would not be allowed on undisturbed areas to minimize the spread of noxious weeds. Weed control costs for Gallatin Forks FAS in 2018 would be up to $1,000, which includes spraying by both FWP and Gallatin County Weed Department.

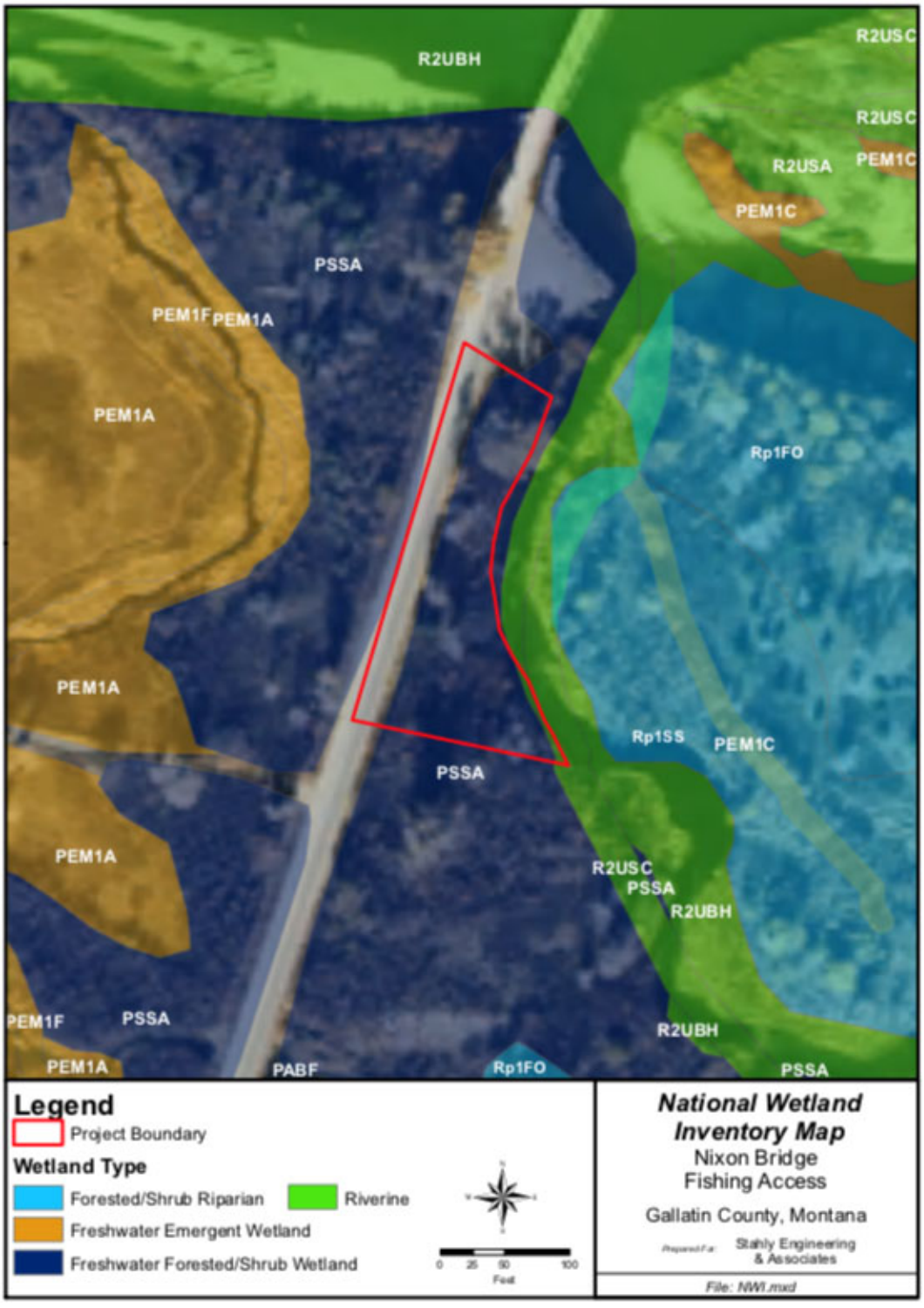
4f. A search of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey on October 12, 2018, found that no portion of the proposed Gallatin Forks FAS is classified as Prime Farmland, Prime Farmland if Irrigated, or Prime Farmland of Local or Statewide Importance and the site has never been plowed for agricultural purposes.

A search of the MNHP Wetland and Riparian Mapping Program on October 12, 2018 and a site visit by FWP staff found that the southern portion of the project site is classified as PSSA, (a Temporarily Flooded, Scrub-Shrub wetland and the land surrounding the project site is classified as Rp1Fo (Riparian Lotic Forest), Rp1SS (Riparian Lotic Scrub-Shrub) and approximately ½ acre is classified as Riparian Lotic Emergent. The site is dominated by

narrow-leaf cottonwood and Rocky Mountain juniper with riparian shrubs along the Gallatin River.

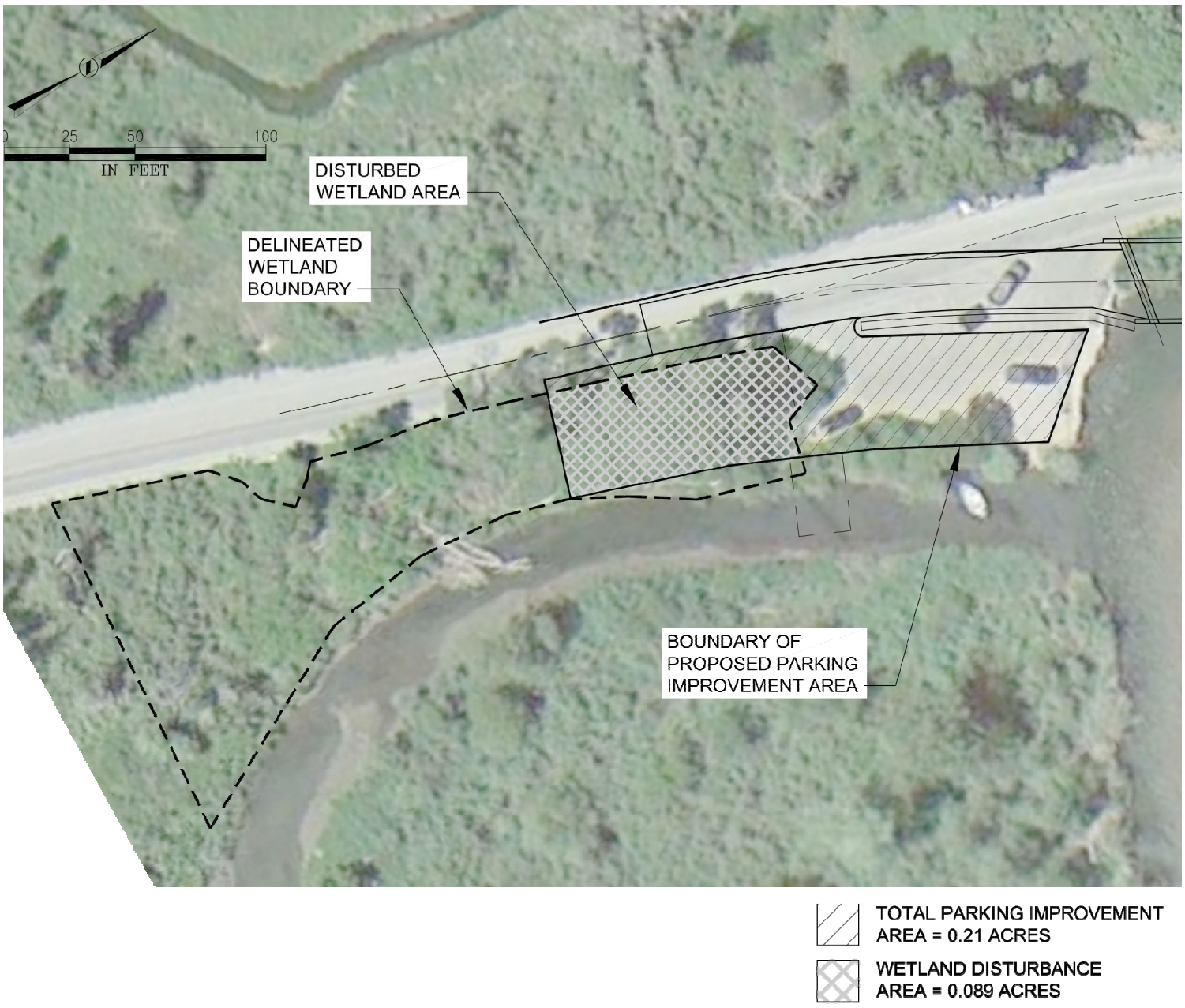
Because it was apparent that the proposed parking area would need to be located near or over a wetland, Confluence Consulting, Inc. was contracted to conduct a detailed wetland delineation on the proposed project site. Confluence Consulting found one wetland in the delineated project area classified as PSSA and characterized as a Freshwater Forested/ Scrub-Shrub Wetland *(Figure 7).*

Figure 7. Wetland Map of Gallatin Forks FAS.



Because the proposed realigned Nixon Gulch Road and 6’ high gabion wall would encroach on the current parking area, reducing parking capacity and space required for maneuvering vehicles with trailers, the proposed parking area would involve less than .1 acre of the delineated wetland, which is under the .1 acre required for wetland mitigation *(Figure 8)*.

Figure 8. Gallatin Forks FAS Wetland Project Disturbance Area



5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X			Yes Positive	5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X			Yes Positive	5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		X				5h.
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				5i.

5a. The proposed developments are designed to minimize impacts to wildlife habitat. A minimal number of trees and shrubs would be removed for construction of the parking area, boat launch, realigned Nixon Gulch Road, gabion retaining wall, and bridge abutments, and efforts would be made to preserve all large healthy trees and snags where possible. Construction would take place in winter to avoid disturbance to nesting birds. This stretch of the Gallatin River is not considered Critical Habitat for any wildlife species.

5b/5c The proposed project would have no impact on the diversity or abundance of game or non-game wildlife species. Common wildlife species whose habitat distribution overlaps the proposed Gallatin Forks FAS include white-tailed deer, mountain lion, black bear, beaver, northern river otter, bald eagle, golden eagle, osprey, sandhill crane, ring-necked pheasants, wild turkeys, common merganser, and great blue heron. A wide variety of resident and migratory bird species use or travel through the area on a seasonal basis, including a variety of raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds.

According to David Moser, FWP Region 3 Fisheries Biologist, and a review of Montana Fisheries Information System (MFISH) database, game fish found in the Gallatin River in the vicinity of Gallatin Forks FAS include brown trout, brook trout, rainbow trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and mountain whitefish. Non-game species found in this reach include longnose sucker, longnose dace, mottled sculpin, mountain sucker, and white sucker. Due to

its small scale, the proposed project is unlikely to adversely impact the fishery or aquatic habitat of the Gallatin River. In fact, the proposed project could improve aquatic habitats by removing the old bridge abutments constricting river flows and allowing more stable, natural conditions

5f. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database indicates occurrences of bald eagle (listed as DM by the USFWS), within the proposed project site. No other occurrences of federally ranked, or considered for ranking, animal or plant species have been found within the vicinity of the proposed project site. The search indicated that Western Cutthroat Trout, great blue heron, veery, golden eagle, sage thrasher, bobolink, and greater short-horned lizard, Montana animal Species of Concern, have been observed in or near the proposed project site *(Appendix B- Environmental Summary)*.

According to Julie Cunningham, FWP Region 3 Wildlife Biologist, the proposed project is unlikely to impact bald eagles. The nearest bald eagle nest is approximately 1.4 miles downstream of the FAS, which is outside of the recommended 0.5-mile distance in the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan, indicating the proposed project would have no effect on bald eagles. While bald eagles were officially delisted in 2007, the USFWS has jurisdiction protecting this species under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). In addition, the proposed project is also unlikely to impact bald eagle as this species are accustomed to some level of disturbance in the area. The area surrounding the FAS has been disturbed by Nixon Gulch Road; a nearby residential development; nearby agricultural activities; and pioneered recreational use of the site for years. According to Julie Cunningham, the proposed project is also unlikely to impact great blue heron, veery, golden eagle, bobolink, sage thrasher, and greater short-horned lizard because the proposed project area is small, the site does not provide preferred habitat to support these species, or the species have become adjusted to the long-term disturbance of the site.

The USFWS designated five animal species and one plant species as needing or potentially needing additional habitat protection in Gallatin County. Canada lynx, grizzly bear, and Ute Ladies Tresses have been listed as Threatened (LT) by the USFWS and are defined as species that are likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range. Wolverine is listed as a proposed species (P) and is defined as any species that is proposed in the Federal Register to be listed as Threatened or Endangered, and whitebark pine is listed as a Candidate (C), defined as species with sufficient information and biological status and threats to propose to list it as threatened and endangered. The proposed replacement of Nixon Bridge and realignment of Nixon Gulch Road across Gallatin Forks FAS would have no impact on these species because the site does not provide preferred habitat for these species.

According to Mike Ross, FWP Region 3 Wolf Biologist, Gallatin Forks FAS is within the habitat of the gray wolf. Currently there are packs with a home range that overlaps the project area. While it is possible for wolves to travel through the project area, none have been recently sighted in the immediate area. The wolf population in Montana is strong and wolves may pass through just about any area including this site. FWP has no concerns with this project impacting gray wolves.

5h. Bald eagle, listed as DM (delisted and being monitored) by the USFWS, has been observed in the vicinity of the proposed project site. However, the proposed project would have no effect on bald eagle.

5i. No wildlife species would be imported or exported to the area as a result of the proposed development. This project only involves the replacement of Nixon Bridge and realignment of Nixon Gulch Road across Gallatin Forks FAS and will not promote the introduction or spread of invasive species.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		Yes	6a.
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?			X		Yes	6b.
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

6a. Construction equipment would cause a temporary, minor increase in noise levels at the project site. Any increase in noise level at the construction site would be short term and minor.

6b. Gallatin Forks FAS is located approximately 2 miles north of the town of Manhattan and is within ½ mile of a 210-lot residential division, with the closest residence adjacent to the property and another 30 residences and ranches within 5 miles of the FAS. Because the site has been used for recreation for over 40 years, the proposed acquisition would have no additional impact on noise in the vicinity of the proposed Gallatin Forks FAS. The minor and temporary increase of noise levels during construction may be heard by nearby neighbors and visitors, though this is an area already impacted by noise from traffic, residential development, and seasonal farm equipment. FWP would follow the guidelines of the good neighbor policy, all of which would mitigate increased noise levels and would limit construction to periods of low visitation to minimize disturbance to others.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7a.
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				7d.

7a. Land use would not change in the vicinity of Gallatin Forks so the proposed project would have no impact on the productivity or profitability of the FAS.

7d. The proposed project would have no adverse affect on nearby residences.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plans, or creates a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		Yes Positive	8c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)			X		Yes	8d.

8a. Physical disturbance of the soil during construction could encourage the establishment of additional noxious weeds on the site. In conjunction with the Gallatin County Weed District, FWP would implement an integrated approach to control noxious weeds, as outlined in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. The integrated plan uses a combination of biological, mechanical, and herbicidal treatments to control noxious weeds. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines to minimize the risk of chemical spills or water contamination and applied by people trained in safe handling techniques.

There is a minor and temporary risk of fuel or oil from heavy equipment accidently being released into the flood plain during construction. Contractors would have absorbent materials on site to minimize any hydrocarbon releases, as well as conduct startup inspection of all hydraulic lines and cylinder seals daily to reduce the potential for a release. FWP would follow FWP BMP during all phases of construction to minimize risks *(Appendix D).*

8c. The proposed project would improve public safety by replacing Nixon Bridge, a one-lane bridge in poor condition that does not meet the needs of the traveling public.

8d. The use of herbicides to control noxious weeds could result in temporary water contamination from an inadvertent spill. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines, outlined in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan, to minimize this risk and would be applied by people trained in safe handling techniques.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				9c.
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				9d.
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				9e.

9c. The proposed project would improve recreation in the area by maintaining access to the Gallatin River, improving parking, developing a boat launch, and constructing a pedestrian river access trail. This would benefit local retail and service businesses *(Appendix C - Tourism Report).*

9d. There would be no change in commercial use of the site.

9e. The proposed developments would give boaters and floaters another opportunity to access this stretch of the Gallatin River. Since it is likely that the proposed project would increase recreational use of the site, there could be a small increase in traffic on Nixon Gulch Road. Otherwise, the proposed project would have little or no impact on traffic on Nixon Gulch Road and any impacts to traffic would be minor and concentrated on weekends during the peak season. The proposed project also would not alter the distribution of population in the area.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				10b.
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources		X				10e.
f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				10f.

10a. The proposed acquisition and development of the Gallatin Forks FAS would have no impact on public services or utilities. The proposed developments would require periodic maintenance by FWP, and the site would continue to be patrolled by FWP.

10b. The proposed project would have no effect on the local and state tax base and revenue because FWP pays property taxes in an amount equal to that of a private individual.

10e. The proposed project would have no impact on revenue from the site.

10f. Projected annual operating, maintenance, weed control, and personnel expense for fiscal year 2019 would be approximately $2,000.

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		Yes	11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				11b.
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X		Yes Positive	11c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				11d.

11a/b. The new Nixon Bridge would be newer and larger than the existing Nixon Bridge that was installed in 1923. The impact of the proposed project on the aesthetic values of the FAS would be determined by the personal preference of the individual.

11c. The proposed project would improve recreational use of the area by improving parking facilities on the FAS and pedestrian access to the river. This could benefit local retail and service businesses *(Appendix C - Tourism Report).*

11d. No designated wild or scenic rivers, trails, or wilderness areas would be impacted by the proposed developments.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?					X	12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?					X	12b.
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)					No Appendix F	12d.

12a. Prior to the commencement of construction, Stahly Engineering would again contact the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and seek a concurrence from SHPO on recommendations for the project. If cultural materials are discovered during construction, work would cease and SHPO would be contacted for a more in-depth investigation.

12b/d. Stahly Engineering & Associates, Inc conducted a cultural resource survey and assessment on June 24, 2018 *(Appendix F – Cultural Resource Survey and Assessment)*. The Nixon Bridge (24GA0393), built in its current location in 1923, was identified as an historic site on the property and was determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places on May 7, 1985.

The first bridge was built in 1879 about one mile southeast of the existing Nixon Bridge to carry freight and traffic over the Gallatin River. This bridge was replaced in 1920 in its current location with a combination timber and iron Howe through truss bridge. In 1923, Gallatin County condemned the old Howe truss bridge but had insufficient funds to build a new bridge. Instead, the county installed a two-span steel pin-connected Pratt through truss bridge at the Nixon Bridge site that had been removed from Central Park about 7 miles southeast of the Nixon crossing.

According to the cultural resource survey and assessment, the existing Nixon Bridge retains a high degree of integrity. Although moved from its original location at Central Park, it has been at its existing site since 1923. The bridge retains all of the structural components that define it as a pin-connected Pratt through truss bridge. The setting of the property is largely intact as its function as a county bridge on a county-maintained road.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE **Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:**	**IMPACT**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		X				13f.
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				13g.

During construction of the proposed project, there may be minor and temporary impacts to the physical environment, but the impacts would be short term and the developments would benefit the community and recreational opportunities over the long term. The proposed project would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long term, the proposed project positively impacts the public's recreational use of the popular Gallatin River.

13f. The proposed project is designed to improve recreational facilities on the site and is not expected to generate organized opposition or substantial public controversy.

13g. The Montana DEQ 318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity and the FWP 124 Montana Stream Protection Act are the only state permits required for the proposed development. In addition, a Gallatin County Floodplain permit would also be required.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

During construction of the proposed project, there may be minor and temporary impacts to the physical environment, but the impacts would be short term and the developments would benefit the community and recreational opportunities over the long term. The proposed project would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long term, the proposed project positively impacts the traveling public's safety and convenience; the public's recreational use of the popular Gallatin River; and the channel and aquatic habitats of the Gallatin River.

The minor impacts to the environment that were identified in the previous section are small in scale and would not influence the overall environment of the immediate area. The natural environment would continue to provide habitat for transient and permanent wildlife species and would be open to the public for river access.

The proposed project would not impact the local wildlife species that frequent the property, and the project would be designed to avoid conditions that stress wildlife populations. This stretch of the Gallatin River is also not considered critical habitat for any fish or wildlife species. Though bald eagle are frequently found along the Gallatin River, the closest nest to the project site is over 1 mile downstream, and it is unlikely that the proposed project would affect bald eagle.

Though westslope cutthroat trout, bald eagle, golden eagle, great blue heron, veery, sage thrasher, bobolink, and greater short-horned lizard, Montana animal Species of Concern, have been observed in the vicinity of the proposed project site, the proposed project is unlikely to impact these species. Construction would commence in Spring 2019, well after critical nesting periods. In addition, these species are likely accustomed to disturbance from Nixon Gulch Road and nearby agricultural, residential, and recreational use in the area for years. While it is possible for wolves to travel through the project area, none have been sighted and there is no pack located in the area, so it is unlikely that the proposed project would impact gray wolves.

Annual Indian paintbrush, Rocky Mountain twinpod, and alkali-marsh ragwort, Montana plant Species of Concern, have been observed within 2 miles of the proposed project site. The proposed project would also have no impact on these species since the proposed Gallatin Forks FAS does not provided preferred habitat for these species.

Soils disturbed during construction could colonize with weeds. Disturbed areas would be re-seeded with a native reclamation seed mix to reduce the establishment of weeds. In conjunction with Gallatin County Weed Control District, FWP would implement the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological, and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property.

The proposed replacement of Nixon Bridge, realignment of Nixon Gulch Road, improvement and expansion of the Gallatin Forks FAS parking area, and development of a designated pedestrian river access trail would provide safe and convenient access to the Gallatin River Ranch development and improved access to the Gallatin River for fishing, boating, and floating. In addition to improving recreational opportunities for angling, floating, boating, swimming, picnicking, dog walking, and wildlife viewing, the proposed project would increase recreational use of this stretch of the popular Gallatin River.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the Gallatin Forks FAS Proposed Acquisition and Development Project, the proposed project and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: *The Bozeman Chronicle, the Belgrade News, and the Helena Independent Record.*
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *http://fwp.mt.gov*.
- Draft EA's will be available at the FWP Region 3 Headquarters in Bozeman and the FWP State Headquarters in Helena.
- A news release will be prepared and distributed to a standard list of media outlets interested in FWP Region 3 issues.
- Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated. If requested within the comment period, FWP will schedule and conduct a public meeting on this proposed project.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., December 31, 2018 and can be mailed to the addresses below:

Jay Pape
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman MT 59718-5496
jpape@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this Proposed Action.

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed

project: therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis. In determining the significance of the impacts, FWP assessed the severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the impact, the probability that the impact would occur or reasonable assurance that the impact would not occur. FWP assessed the growth-inducing or growth-inhibiting aspects of the impact, the importance to the state and to society of the environmental resource or value effected, any precedent that would be set as a result of an impact of the proposed project that would commit FWP to future actions; and potential conflicts with local, federal, or state laws. As this EA revealed no significant impacts from the proposed project, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

2. Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Travis Horton
Region 3 Fisheries Manager
1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718
thorton@mt.gov
(406) 994-3155

Andrea Darling
FWP EA Contractor
39 Big Dipper Drive
Montana City, MT 59634
apdarling@gmail.com

3. List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Design and Construction
  - Lands Unit
  - Legal Unit
- Fisheries Division
- Wildlife Division

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)
Montana State Historic Preservation Office

APPENDICES

A. MCA 23-1-110 Qualification Checklist
B. Environmental Summary Report - Montana Natural Heritage Program
C. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
D. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Best Management Practices
E. LWCF Section 6(f) Concurrence Memorandum
F. Gallatin Forks FAS Cultural Resource Survey and Assessment
G. Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Letter of Response